

IBN KAMMUNA'S APPROACH IN HIS BOOK "TANQIH AL-ABHATH LIL-MILAL AL-THALATH" (EXAMINATION OF THE INQUIRIES INTO THE THREE FAITHS - JUDAISM, CHRISTIANITY, AND ISLAM) IN LIGHT OF THE QUR'AN AND SUNNAH: A CRITICAL ANALYTICAL STUDY

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Abstract:

Objective: This study aimed to clarify: the general characteristics of Ibn Kammuna's approach which he undertook to follow in his book, his presentation of prophethood, explain the method of presentation and rebuttal in Ibn Kammuna's presentation of texts, misconceptions, and assertion within each of the three faiths (Judaism, Christianity, and Islam), and to demonstrate the truth of Ibn Kammuna's objectivity and his commitment to the promises he made in the introduction of his book.

Methodology: The researchers followed the descriptive approach in its inductive and analytical method, and the critical approach.

Results: The study reached several results, the most important of which are: First: Ibn Kammuna's acknowledgment of prophethood in the manner of the philosophers. Second: Ibn Kammuna's belief in Judaism according to the Jewish approach, his assertion of the transmission of the Torah and the Law, the absence of abrogation, his interpretation of its texts, and his disavowal of its creed. Third: Ibn Kammuna's adoption of a method of sympathy and fierce defense of Christianity, provided that it is independent of Judaism. Fourth: Ibn Kammuna's fierce stance as an opponent against the Islamic faith. Fifth: Ibn Kammuna's lack of commitment to the approach he claimed to follow in his book's introduction, the most important of which is objectivity.

Recommendations: This study recommends the following: First: Increasing the attention of specialists from Islamic scholars and students of knowledge to the issue of responding to the misconceptions raised by the People of the Book from Jews and Christians. Second: Paying attention to writing theses and dissertations in which a detailed refutation is given to Ibn Kammuna and what he mentioned in his book "Tanqih al-Abhath lil-Milal al-Thalath" as this topic holds significant importance, the material is ample, and the sources are available, God willing.

Keywords: *Approach, Christianity, Ibn Kammuna, Islam, Judaism.*

INTRODUCTION

All praise is due to Allah, Lord of the worlds — the One, the Eternal, who created everything in due proportion and fashioned all things in the best form. He has taken no child — exalted is He! And may peace and blessings be upon the Seal of the Prophets and Messengers, Mohammed (peace be upon him), and upon those who follow him with excellence until the Day of Judgment.

Among the greatest blessings of Allah upon His servants is that He sent to them messengers as bearers of glad tidings and as warners. They were lights amid the darkness, calling by Allah's command to the truth that there is no god but He. Each one of them was a devoted servant of Allah. Allah took a covenant from them and from their nations that if a final Messenger were sent to confirm their messages, they would surely believe in him and support

him. Allah the Most High said: "And [recall, O People of the Scripture], when Allah took the covenant of the prophets, [saying], 'Whatever I give you of the Scripture and wisdom and then there comes to you a messenger confirming what is with you, you must believe in him and support him.' [Allah] said, 'Have you acknowledged and taken upon that My commitment?' They said, 'We have acknowledged it.' He said, 'Then bear witness, and I am with you among the witnesses.'" (Aal 'Imran: 81).

Thus, Islam was the final message for all humankind. Allah preserved it and appointed among its people those who would defend it. It is therefore an obligation upon every capable believer to defend it to the best of their ability and to call others to it with insight and wisdom.

The People of the Book were known for their contentiousness and envy, which is why the Noble Qur'an frequently addresses them—sometimes by offering encouragement, and at other times through reproach and refutation of their polytheism. Allah the Most High said: "If We had intended to take a pastime, We could have taken it from [what is] with Us—if We were ever to do so. Rather, We hurl the truth against falsehood, and it crushes it, and behold, it vanishes. And woe to you for what you describe." (Al-Anbiya: 17–18). Some among them believed, while many others clung to disbelief. To this day, there continue to emerge from among them those who argue against the religion and oppose it through various means. One of the most prominent of these means is writing.

Since writing in the field of comparative religion—among the People of the Book and others—has followed diverse methodologies and differing approaches, some of which are accusatory, some defensive, some claiming to seek truth and correctness, others recounting history, offering refutations, or mixing truth with falsehood, each with its own intent and direction, it became necessary for Muslim scholars to exert effort in studying what has been circulated among the public, what has been written about their religion, and what is needed to establish the proof, to call people to Allah, to clarify the true methodology and essence of Islam, to extract what is correct, and to warn against paths of misguidance and to refute them—so that no one would be deceived by them or misled by illusion or false perception.

Among the earliest non-Muslims to write in the field of comparative religion was Ibn Kammunah, in his book titled *"Tanqih al-Abhath li-l-Milal al-Thalath: al-Yahudiyya wa al-Mash'iyya wa al-Islam"* (Examination of the Three Faiths: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam).

From this point arises the present study, entitled: **"The Methodology of Ibn Kammunah in *Tanqih al-Abhath li-l-Milal al-Thalath*: A Critical Analytical Study.**" And Allah is the One from whom help is sought, upon Him is reliance, and He is the One who grants success.

Among the non-Muslims who wrote on the comparison of religions in earlier times was Ibn Kammuna, in his book titled *"Tanqih al-Abhath li-l-Milal al-Thalath: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam"*. From this point, the current study, entitled *"The Method of Ibn Kammuna in His Book 'Tanqih al-Abhath li-l-Milal al-Thalath: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam': An Analytical and Critical Study"*, was undertaken. And God is the One whose help is sought, upon Him is our reliance, and He is the One who grants success.

Importance of the Study:

The significance of this study lies in the following points:

1. To clarify the method followed by Ibn Kammuna in his book.
2. To compare how Ibn Kammuna presented and critiqued Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, in order to reveal the degree of objectivity in his work and the differences in how he presented and responded to each of them.
3. To contribute to the Islamic library with research that focuses on critique within the field of comparative religion.

The study problem

The core problem of this study revolves around the following question: **What is the method that Ibn Kammuna followed in his book *Tanqih al-Abhath li-l-Milal al-Thalath* in terms of analysis and critique?**

From this main question, several sub-questions emerge:

1. What are the general features of Ibn Kammuna's methodology as stated by himself in the introduction and in his presentation of prophethood?
2. How did Ibn Kammuna deal with each of the three religions—Judaism, Christianity, and Islam—through his method of presentation and refutation?
3. Did Ibn Kammuna adhere to the methodology he committed to in his introduction? And was he fair and balanced in his treatment of the three religions?

Objectives of the Study:

This study aims to achieve the following objectives:

1. To clarify the general features of Ibn Kammuna's methodology as he outlined them in the introduction and in his discussion of prophethood.
2. To explain the method of presentation and refutation used by Ibn Kammuna in addressing the texts, doubts, and arguments of each of the three religions.

3. To examine the extent of Ibn Kammuna's objectivity and his commitment to the methodology he promised in the introduction of his book.

Related Studies:

Within the limits of our knowledge, we did not find any published previous studies specifically on the methodology of Ibn Kammuna in his book *Tanqih al-Abhah*, nor any studies that directly address it. Rather, we found some titles of studies that their authors have not published; we will mention them as we found them. As for our study, it was conducted without reference to any prior study, making it difficult for us to distinguish it from others that we did not find:

First: A study by (ayyad, Abdul Razzaq), entitled: "The Methodology of Ibn Kammuna in Critiquing the Jewish Religion".

This study deals with Ibn Kammuna and his critique of Judaism through his works, along with a biography of Ibn Kammuna and the era in which he lived. It examines the methodology he adopted in his critique of Judaism and its sacred books, whether it was a single methodology or multiple methods, the effectiveness of this methodology, the sources he relied upon in his critique of Judaism, and whether he was fair in his research on Judaism.

Second: A study by (al-Dulaimi, Alaa Dawud, 2015), titled: "Critique of Ibn Kammuna's Views in His Book Tanqih al-Abhath li-l-Milal al-Thalath (Judaism, Christianity, Islam)." We did not have access to this study.

Third: The Study by Khawaled, Hilal, Master's Thesis, University of Algiers, 2008, entitled: "Al-Samaw'al al-Maghribi and Ibn Kammuna and Their Methodologies in Criticizing Religions Through Their Respective Books *Refutation of the Jews* and *Examination of the Three Faiths*." We were unable to access this study.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:

To achieve the objectives of this research, the two researchers adopted the descriptive method with its inductive-critical approach, which includes the following methodologies:

1. **The Inductive Method:**
This consists of thoroughly examining Ibn Kammuna's book in its entirety in order to trace the methodology he followed.
2. **The Analytical-Critical Method:**
This involves analyzing the method Ibn Kammuna employed in presenting and responding to ideas, engaging with texts, doubts, and arguments—regarding Judaism, Christianity, and Islam—and critiquing them.
3. **The Comparative Method:**
This involves comparing Ibn Kammuna's dealing with Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, and comparing what he actually did with what he promised to do in his introduction.

Research Outline

The nature of this research required it to be structured as an introduction, a preamble, two main sections (chapters), and a conclusion, as follows:

Preface, which includes:

First: An introduction to Ibn Kammuna.

Second: An introduction to his book *Examination of the Three Faiths* and its key terms.

First Chapter: General Features of the Book's Methodology

- Section One: Ibn Kammuna's methodology as presented in the introduction.
- Section Two: Ibn Kammuna's methodology regarding prophethood.

Second Chapter: Ibn Kammuna's Method of Presentation and Refutation across the Three Religions

- Section One: His methodology regarding Judaism.
- Section Two: His methodology regarding Christianity.
- Section Three: His methodology regarding Islam.

Conclusion: It presents the key findings and recommendations.

Preface

Firstly: An Introduction to Ibn Kammuna

His Name: "*Sad ibn Mansur ibn Sad ibn al-Hassan ibn Hibat Allah, 'Izz al-Dawla Ibn Kammuna*" (Al-Zarkali, 2002). "Ibn Kammuna" is his well-known epithet. He lived in Baghdad and, at one point, worked with the pagan Mongol invaders. His fame is primarily associated with his book "*Al-Hikma al-Jadjida (The New Philosophy)*" (Al-Masiri, n.d.).

His Works:

Ibn Kammuna authored several works, including:

- "*Tadhkira fi al-Kimiya' (Memoir on Alchemy)*"

- *"Tanqih al-Abhath fi al-Milal al-Thala*
 - *th (Examination of the Three Faiths)*
 - *A commentary on "Al-Uṣul wa-l-Jumal" from the essentials of logic and philosophy according to Ibn Sinaa*
 - *A commentary on Suhrawardi's "Talwiḥaat" in philosophy*
 - *"Al-Kashif fi al-Maṭiq (The Clarifier in Logic)"*
 - *"Kitab al-Ḥikma al-Jadida (The Book of the New Philosophy)"*
- (Al-Babani, 1951). Some of these works are lost, while others survive in manuscript form and have been critically edited.

Attitudes and Death:

Ibn Kammuna's polemics provoked public outrage, as he is considered the first Jewish apologist to engage in theological disputation against the Qur'an (Abdul Muhsin, n.d.). According to Ibn al-Fuwaṭi (d. 723 AH), in his book:

"The masses gathered to storm his house and kill him. Emir Tamskay, the governor of Iraq, along with Majd al-Din Ibn al-Athir and a group of judges, went to the Mustanṣiriyya School and summoned the chief judge and scholars to investigate the matter. They sought Ibn Kammuna, but he went into hiding... Ibn al-Athir went out to calm the crowd, but they insulted him and accused him of being biased toward Ibn Kammuna and defending him. The governor then ordered a public proclamation throughout Baghdad calling on the people to gather early the next morning outside the city walls to burn Ibn Kammuna. The crowd quieted down, and he was not mentioned again after that.

As for Ibn Kammuna, he was placed in a sealed box and transported to al-Ḥillah, where his son worked as a scribe. He stayed there for a few days and died there" (Ibn al-Fuwaṭi, 2003/1424 AH). He passed away in the year 683 AH / 1284 CE (Al-Zarkali, 2002).

Secondly: An Introduction to the Book

Introducing the Book *Tanqih al-Abhath* and Its Terminology

The aim of introducing this book is to provide a general overview of it, along with its key terms—since understanding the title depends on a conception of the content. The following points explain this: The book *Tanqih al-Abhath* (Refinement of Investigations) is one of the works concerned with comparative religion. Its author claimed to have presented in it a historical overview of the three religions—Judaism, Christianity, and Islam—each according to the beliefs of its adherents. It is worth mentioning that some individuals contributed to Ibn Kammuna's authorship of the book. According to what he himself stated in the appendices of the book, two Jews assisted him: one of them, Abu al-Ḥassan known as Ibn al-Maḥrumah, added glosses to the book; the other, Ibn al-Qira, read the book and helped in reviewing it. A third contributor was a Christian, Ibn Arjuk. Thus, Ibn Kammuna was not working alone; he sought help from members of his own faith, as well as a Christian (Ibn Kammuna, n.d.). However, he did not seek help from any Muslim.

The book's introducer mentioned in the preface: "*Perhaps there were other assistants who helped in producing this book*" (The Introduction of Ibn Kammuna, n.d.).

The book comprises 111 pages, a preface, and four main chapters, with each chapter divided into several issues.

The Book's Terminology

1) *Tanqih* (Refinement)

Linguistically:

Al-Azhari (Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad ibn al-Azhari al-Harawi al-Shafi'i, 282–370 AH / 895–981 AD), a prominent scholar of language and literature, stated in *Tahdhib al-Lughah*: "*Al-munaqqih (the refiner)* of speech is the one who scrutinizes it and examines it carefully. I have refined the speech." He also reported that Abu 'Amr ibn al-Alaa used the expression in a proverb: "*The smooth stone no longer needs refinement.*" He further explained: "*Al-naqqh (refinement) means that which is pure and free from sand.*" (Al-Azhari, 2001 AD; see also Al-Zarkali, 2002 AD, and Al-Dhahabi, 1405 AH / 1985 AD) Al-Jawhari (d. 393 AH / 1002 AD) defined it as follows: "*[Naqḥa]* Refining a tree trunk means trimming it; refining poetry means polishing it. It is said: the best poetry is that which is refined over a year. Refining a bone means extracting its marrow. It is said: I refined the bone and extracted its marrow — both meaning the same. And when the fat of the she-camel diminishes, it is also said: *tanqha*." (Al-Jawhari, 1407 AH / 1987 AD).

Terminologically:

Al-Kafawi (d. 1095 AH) defined *tanqih* as: "A concise expression with a clear meaning."

(Al-Kafawi, n.d.)

2) Researches

Linguistically:

Al-Farahidi (d. 173 AH) said: "*Baḥṭh* (searching) is your act of seeking something in the dust, or your inquiry to obtain information. You say: *Asta-biḥṭhu 'anhu* and *Abḥathu* — meaning, 'I am searching for it.' *Al-Baḥṭh* refers to camels that, as they walk, dig into the ground with their front legs and throw back the dust with their hind legs."

(Al-Farahidi, n.d.). Al-Azhari (d. 370 AH) gave a similar meaning: "*Baḥṭh* is to ask about something and seek information. It is said: *Baḥathu*, *Abḥathu*, *baḥthan*, *istabḥathu*, *ibtahathu*, and *tabaḥathu* – all with the same meaning." (Al-Azhari, 2001 AD). Al-Jawhari (d. 393 AH) wrote: "[*Baḥatha*] which means I searched for something or investigated it, i.e., I examined it closely." (Al-Jawhari, 1407 AH / 1987 AD)

Terminologically:

Al-Kafawi (d. 1095 AH) said: "*Baḥatha fī al-arḍ*: He dug into it. As in: {Then Allah sent a crow digging in the earth} [Quran 5:31].

In technical usage, *baḥṭh* is the process of affirming either a positive or negative relation between a subject and predicate through evidence, and seeking to establish it through questioning in order to reveal the truth and eliminate falsehood.

A complete *baḥṭh* has three essential and sequential parts: premises, middle terms, and conclusions. These are the foundational premises upon which proofs and arguments are built, including self-evident truths and commonly accepted principles such as the notions of circularity (*dawr*) and infinite regress (*tasalsul*). (Al-Kafawi, n.d.)

3) *Al-Milal* (Religions/Creeds)

Linguistically:

It is the plural of *millah* (creed), and the author of *Mukhtar al-Ṣiḥaḥ* defines it as: "*Millah*: religion or religious law (shariah)." (Al-Razi, 1420 AH / 1999 AD)

Terminologically:

The technical definition generally aligns with the linguistic one. However, some scholars offer a more detailed distinction. For instance, Al-Askari (n.d.) wrote: "*Millah* is the name of an entire revealed law (shariah)."

Al-Kafawi (d. 1095 AH) further elaborated: "*Millah* is what God prescribed for His servants through His Prophet. The word *din* (religion) is similar, but *millah* is used in the context of calling people to it, whereas *din* is used in the context of obedience and submission to it. *Millah* also means a way or path. It is not added (linguistically) to God or to individual members of the Prophet's nation, and it is not used for individual acts of worship. For example, we do not say 'God's *millah*,' nor 'my *millah*,' nor 'prayer is the *millah* of God.'" (Al-Kafawi, n.d.)

Summary:

Upon examining all the definitions above, we can infer the intended meaning of the book's title: It appears that the author aimed to convey the following: He will summarize and extract discussions from the three major religions (Judaism, Christianity, and Islam), in a refined, selective, inquisitive, and investigative manner—presenting them with evidence and argument, distinguishing between truth and falsehood, and ultimately arriving at a definitive and reasoned conclusion.

Chapter one: General Feature of the book Methodology

Ibn Kammuna's book is characterized by general features that he first imposed upon himself in his introduction. We then complemented these with his approach to the concept of prophethood, since what he established therein had a clear impact on the rest of his research, leaving its mark on every methodological path he pursued in his book concerning the three religions.

First Topic: Ibn Kammuna's Methodology as Stated in His Introduction

Ibn Kammuna presented a brief introduction to his book, in which he laid the foundation for the methodology he followed, including pledges he made to himself to adhere to. These were as follows:

1. He followed the style and method of Muslim authors in terms of introduction, starting and ending with praise of and gratitude to God, supplication, and invocation of blessings upon the Prophet. He said: "*Praise be to God for His guidance and direction. I beseech Him by His Most Beautiful Names... especially upon His chosen Messenger, and upon his family and his companions, the people of wisdom.*" (Ibn Kammuna, n.d.)
He did not explicitly state that he was following this Islamic format, unlike other elements to be mentioned below, but it can easily be observed through reading.
2. He began with the oldest of the religions according to the chronological order of their emergence. (Ibn Kammuna, n.d.)
3. He grounded his discussion on each religion according to the statements of the scholars and adherents of that religion itself—not based on what other religions say about it. He stated: "*I have conveyed, for each of these religions, the foundational beliefs—excluding the detailed branches, as it is difficult to fully enumerate them. I then followed this with an account of the arguments of their adherents for the validity of the prophethood claimed by each religion.*" (Ibn Kammuna, n.d.)
4. He presented the criticisms raised against each religion, along with the responses to those criticisms, and evaluated which of these responses were valid. (Ibn Kammuna, n.d.)
5. He claimed objectivity in his presentation, distancing himself from personal bias or favoritism toward any religion. He stated:

6. *"In all of this, I have not spoken with bias nor have I inclined toward favoring one religion over another; rather, I have carried each religion's inquiry to its furthest extent."* (Ibn Kammuna, n.d.)

In truth, however, this methodology is a claim made by Ibn Kammuna, and it is subject to critique and cannot be accepted without scrutiny. The reality of his objectivity and adherence to the commitments he made for his methodology must be examined thoroughly, and this is the very focus of this study, God willing.

Second Topic: Prophethood According to Ibn Kammuna

The issue of prophethood received substantial attention from Ibn Kammuna. He began his book with a chapter on prophethood and made it comprehensive, not specifying a prophet from any particular religion. It is as though he intended to first establish his concept and belief regarding prophethood before discussing each religion's prophet individually or, in his words, before recounting "the proofs presented by their followers for the truth of the prophet who brought it" (Ibn Kammuna, n.d.). He introduced the subject by discussing its reality, nature, ranks, evidences for its existence, doubts surrounding it, refutations of those doubts, and more. His methodology can be detailed as follows:

1. Affirmation of Prophethood, and Explanation of Its Characteristics, Nature, and Proofs — According to the Method of Muslim Philosophers

Ibn Kammuna affirmed the reality of prophethood and did not deny it; he believed in it. However, his method of proving it requires analysis and detail. He defined prophethood as follows: "It is a stage beyond reason, in which another eye opens through which the unseen is perceived — what will be in the future, what has occurred in the past, and other matters — matters that the intellect is excluded from, just as the faculty of discernment is excluded from the apprehensions of the intellect, and the senses from the apprehensions of discernment." (Ibn Kammuna, n.d.)

He presented this definition after introducing the idea that God created the senses and then created the intellect, closely linking the creation of the intellect to the concept of prophethood. This is a purely philosophical approach that Ibn Kammuna borrowed from earlier philosophers. In fact, he quoted verbatim much of this introduction about the nature and definition of prophethood from al-Ghazali (d. 505 AH), particularly from *al-Munqidh min al-Dalal* (*The Deliverer from Error*) (al-Ghazali, n.d.) — a work written by al-Ghazali during a period of deep influence by Greek philosophy. Al-Ghazali later changed his approach and even refuted the philosophers (Salim, 1413 AH / 1992 AD). This is not the place to elaborate on al-Ghazali's shifts in methodology, but a reader of his work would not be able to distinguish between what al-Ghazali originally wrote and what Ibn Kammuna copied — since the latter does not indicate at all that he is quoting.

2. Emphasis on the Theory of the Psychic Power of Prophethood

Ibn Kammuna placed great emphasis on the concept of the *soul* — particularly its strength and purity, and how these qualities relate to the very being of the prophet. He mentioned three characteristics of prophethood, two of which concern the soul. He said:

"The first: a quality in the power and essence of the soul that allows it to affect the material world and other souls, to remove one form, create another, or substitute one accident for another. The second: in the theoretical faculty, whereby the soul becomes so pure that it is highly receptive to knowledge from its source and bestower, such that intelligible truths are revealed to it in a short time without learning from others of its kind." (Ibn Kammuna, n.d.)

As for his affirmation of prophethood, he presented three views (Ibn Kammuna, n.d.) — but did not attribute them to any specific individuals. This follows the same method he used in his introduction to prophethood. These views blended opinions from Jewish scholars and philosophers (al-Razi, 1986 AD), and he did not favor or reject any of them. They revolved around the following conditions: that the prophet be knowledgeable, morally good (not evil), have a perfected nature, and whether a person predisposed to prophecy necessarily becomes a prophet. All of these are matters related to the soul — and Ibn Kammuna accepted them entirely.

3. His Approach to Revelation: The Possibility of Revelation Through Dreams and Imagined Visions

a. The Issue of Prophetic Dreams:

Ibn Kammuna categorized revelation logically into four types: in sleep or wakefulness, each either through an angel or without an intermediary. Based on this, he formulated ten degrees of prophethood. He said: "A single prophet may receive revelation through one of these ranks." (Ibn Kammuna, n.d.)

b. The Issue of Imagination:

Ibn Kammuna allowed for the possibility that revelation may occur entirely through imagination, but only for some prophets and not others. He stated: "Like when a person sees a dream and imagines during it that he has awoken, narrated the dream to others, and explained its meaning — yet the entire experience remains within the dream." (Ibn Kammuna, n.d.) Through this, he lays the foundation for a psychological view of revelation, specifically through imagined images. He further stated: "The imaginative soul may reach such perfection that the sensory faculties are not fully occupied with delivering sensory impressions to it, and thus do not prevent it from serving the rational soul in its connection with the revelatory principles. In such cases, the unseen may become visible to the prophet even while awake." (Ibn Kammuna, n.d.)

c. The Issue of Prophetic Exaggeration:

Ibn Kammuna also addressed the matter of hyperbole and metaphor in prophetic speech or revelation. He said: "Prophets may use metaphors, allegories, and expressions of exaggeration... Whoever interprets these expressions literally may fall into great error." (Ibn Kammuna, n.d.)

In reality, these three approaches, with all their respective details — lead to one conclusion, despite their differing expressions: That prophethood is something acquired, a divine overflow (or emanation) that God bestows upon a person according to his preparedness. It involves magnifying the power of the soul and is not a fixed or essential attribute exclusive to the prophet. Rather, it is a relational quality, in line with the methodology of the philosophers. (Ibn Taymiyyah, 1406 AH / 1986 AD)

Fourth: The Theory of the Prophet as a Social Reformer

Ibn Kammuna emphasized the necessity of the prophet's presence as a social reformer (Al-Fart, 1400 AH / 1980 AD), linking this role both to the prophet's own psyche and to people's need for such a figure. He said: "The scholar and the prophet may find within themselves a motive to guide people to what benefits them, so they call people to that—whether the call is accepted or not." (Ibn Kammuna, n.d.). Elsewhere, he added: "There must be a person who can speak to people and obligate them with this [truth]. If left to their own opinions, they would differ. And whoever reflects with discernment on the Creator's care for His creation will find the need for such a person in ensuring the uprightness of the human species..." (Ibn Kammuna, n.d.)

Fifth: The Issue of Miracles, *Karamat* (Saintly Wonders), and False Claimants to Prophethood

In his discussion of prophethood, Ibn Kammuna addressed the concept of miracles, defining them according to linguistic norms and the people of revealed religions (Ibn Kammuna, n.d.). He listed five conditions for a miracle:

1. It must occur during a time of moral responsibility (*taklif*),
2. It must be beyond human ability or anything similar,
3. It must violate the natural order,
4. It must occur during the time one claims prophet hood,
5. It must be from God or through His command and enabling.

He then raised seven doubts about the nature of miracles and elaborated on them at length, only responding briefly to four of them. Ibn Kammuna also touched upon the difference between miracles and saintly wonders (*karamat*) with a weak and cautious distinction, saying: "The difference between the miracles of prophets and the *karamat* of saints is that *karamat* are not accompanied by a claim to prophethood." (Ibn Kammuna, n.d.). He then differentiated both from sorcery, suggesting that a sorcerer may perform acts resembling miracles, but God prevents this by sending someone to oppose or expose them. He once again emphasized the role of psychic power (*quwwa nafsīyya*) in producing miraculous acts.

This approach is essentially philosophical, and Ibn Kammuna borrowed it verbatim (with some abbreviation) from al-Ghazali's *Maarīj al-Nafs*. Al-Ghazali wrote: "We do not deny that there may exist psychic powers greater in action and effect than our own souls—such that their influence is not limited to their own physical matter (their body), but can affect external material things according to what the soul imagines. These effects—such as moving, cooling, heating, or condensing—can be associated with claims of prophethood or saintly wonder... But if such power is used by someone wicked for evil, then he is a vile sorcerer." (Al-Ghazali, 1975 AD). Ibn Kammuna also addressed the possibility of a false claimant to prophethood performing extraordinary acts. He stated: "When one looks closely at what the claimant to prophethood presents, and reflects on his reports and conduct... one might, along with certain indications that cannot be fully expressed, come to believe in his prophethood—even without relying on the supernatural acts he performs." (Ibn Kammuna, n.d.).

From this and similar statements, it becomes clear that Ibn Kammuna acknowledged the possibility of violations of natural laws by saints, sorcerers, and even false prophets. His position is that miracles alone are not sufficient for belief in a prophet: "Unless they are accompanied by external indications beyond enumeration... Miracles are merely one type of evidence among many." (Ibn Kammuna, n.d.)

The Core Problem

The problem in this matter is deep and subtle. One who casts doubt on a prophet's miracle is essentially casting doubt on his prophethood. If readers were to selectively accept or reject miracles based on personal preference, the issue would become extremely dangerous. Ibn Taymiyyah (d. 728 AH) decisively addressed this issue, stating: "A liar lacks the reality of prophethood and possesses its opposite—namely, falsehood in the claim. It is impossible for him to be a true prophet. Thus, it is impossible for God to create what indicates prophetic truth without the presence of truth itself, or alongside falsehood... To create a sign of truth without actual truth is impossible. This is like the feats of sorcerers and fortune-tellers—they are not signs of prophethood because they are common among non-prophets and not violations of the norm for them, but part of their usual practices. Therefore, it is an error to consider them evidence [of prophethood]." (Ibn Taymiyyah, 1420 AH / 2000 AD)

Conclusion

In conclusion, all these theories and categories in Ibn Kammuna's treatment of prophethood—and his methodology—are closely interconnected. They are not independently constructed by him, as previously noted.

Thus, any analysis or critique of one part applies equally to the others, due to their shared philosophical framework. Moreover, Ibn Kammuna presented them collectively in an extensive discussion. The segmentation and naming of these approaches here are simply research-based classifications we have devised for clarity and organization. And God knows best.

Chapter two: Ibn Kammuna's Method of Presentation and Refutation Regarding the Three Religions

The method of presentation and refutation is a dominant and prominent feature in Ibn Kammuna's treatment of the three religions. However, this overarching method contains within it multiple approaches, which vary depending on his engagement with the texts of each religion, the nature of the objections raised, the way he presents doctrines, the sources he adopts, and how he handles them, including what he affirms and what he rejects. All these aspects differ across the three faiths.

First Topic: His Method in Discussing Judaism

Ibn Kammuna begins his discussion of Judaism with a historical overview, including affirmation of the truth of the Torah as a sacred scripture. On this basis, he believes in everything contained within it, even defending it vigorously. He then presents seven objections to Judaism and answers them. His approach can be broken down into the following methodological points:

1. Ascribing Exclusivity to Judaism — as a religion, a book, a prophet, and miracles:

- He denies any **abrogation** (*naskh*) of the Torah or the Jewish law, arguing that it neither abrogates previous laws nor is abrogated by subsequent ones.
- He writes: "The Children of Israel are held accountable for what was commanded of all nations before Moses, in addition to what God specifically assigned to them through His messenger Moses, as a form of honor and divine care." (Ibn Kammuna, *n.d.*)
- He also states: "Most people, and adherents of this view among the Jews, do not accept the occurrence of miracles—fulfilling all the conditions required for belief—for anyone other than Moses and the prophets who followed him, whose prophethood they acknowledge." (Ibn Kammuna, *n.d.*)

2. Method of Allegorical Interpretation and Figurative Reading of Texts:

- Ibn Kammuna interprets Jewish texts allegorically to avoid affirming anthropomorphism or theological flaws:
 - For example, the ritual impurity that, according to Jewish law, can only be cleansed by the ashes of a red heifer is interpreted as having three symbolic meanings, so as not to imply that the Torah is outdated.
 - He also reinterprets anthropomorphic descriptions of God—like smelling burnt offerings or feelings of regret—as metaphors indicating divine acceptance or grandeur.
 - He states: "This image created by God, which prophets and saints see and which indicates His majesty and greatness, is metaphorically called 'God.' The mention of God 'smelling the offerings' is a metaphor for divine acceptance... The 'regret' attributed to Him must be interpreted along these lines." (Ibn Kammuna, *n.d.*)
- To avoid the accusation of anthropomorphism, he claims these visions are forms of honor or inner insight akin to dreams.

3. Method of Excusing Textual Differences without Claiming Corruption:

- He tries to deflect accusations of textual corruption by attributing variations in Torah manuscripts (Hebrew, Samaritan, and Christian versions) to errors in translation, transcription, or neglect, and not to intentional distortion.
- He claims that differences stem from interpretation and the personal perspective of scribes, especially noting that the Samaritans originally did not use the Torah for religious devotion—thus its preservation was not rigorous.
- Despite this, he refuses to label these discrepancies as 'distortion' (*tahrif*).

4. Use of Generalities and Emotional Appeals, Despite Contradictions:

- He employs broad assumptions to support the claim of Torah's uninterrupted transmission (*tawatur*): "Books that are considered beneficial and respectable are often transmitted over hundreds of years; how much more so a book believed to be the Word of God." (Ibn Kammuna, *n.d.*)
- He argues that even opponents of the Jews admit to this continued transmission.
- Yet, elsewhere, he contradicts himself: "Some events and circumstances in Jewish history have indeed fallen out of continuous transmission due to the passage of time or their perceived insignificance." (Ibn Kammuna, *n.d.*)
- He also acknowledges: "Islamic law is not complete without affirming that the Mosaic law has been abrogated, and therefore Muslims must assert that the Torah has been altered so they are not bound by it." (Ibn Kammuna, *n.d.*). Thus, **how can continuous transmission exist alongside claims of disruption?**

5. Affirmation of Weak Biblical Stories:

- Ibn Kammuna upholds questionable biblical narratives, like the stories of Adam, Lot, Judah, Solomon, and others, justifying them with these principles:
 - Fame is relative: What is improbable in one era might be plausible in another.
 - Every story in the Torah has a necessary legal or spiritual benefit.
 - He writes: “David and Solomon were not considered infallible because they were not among the messengers.” (Ibn Kammuna, *n.d.*)
 - These principles become a basis for undermining prophetic sanctity, as critiqued by Ibn al-Qayyim (*n.d.*).

6. Strict Dismissal of Critics:

- He deals harshly with those who question him, using strong language such as: “That is nothing but obstinate denial.” (Ibn Kammuna, *n.d.*) “Whoever is fair-minded and not intent on stubbornness knows certainly that their transmission is not completely broken.” (Ibn Kammuna, *n.d.*)

7. Quoting the Qur’an Selectively to Support Jewish Claims:

- His approach involves quoting partial verses that suit his purposes:
- Example: “They say, ‘None shall enter Paradise except those who are Jews or Christians’ ... And they say, ‘The Fire shall not touch us except for a few days.’” (Ibn Kammuna, *n.d.*)
- However, the full verse [al-Baqarah 111] refutes this claim.
- According to *Ibn Ashur* (1984 AD), this verse and its context challenge the false **assumptions** of Jews and Christians, not endorse them.
- Ibn Kammuna also misuses: “How can they make you a judge while they have the Torah, in which is God’s judgment?”—without acknowledging verses that clearly state the Torah has been distorted, as noted by *Ibn Taymiyyah* (1419 AH / 1999 AD).
- True objectivity requires belief in the entire Qur’an, not in selected verses.

8. Brevity in Presenting Doubts, Length in Refuting Them:

Ibn Kammuna uses brevity when presenting objections to Judaism, but extensively elaborates when refuting them, indicating a clear bias in favor of Judaism. (Ibn Kammuna, *n.d.*)

Second Topic: Ibn Kammuna’s Method in Addressing Christianity

In the third chapter of his book, Ibn Kammuna turns to Christianity, narrating its doctrines in the way Christians themselves profess them, then proceeds to discuss the Nicene Creed following the Council of Nicaea (318 bishops), thus referencing the early Church councils (Al-Khalf, 1418 AH / 1997 AD). He then discusses ancient Christian sects such as the Jacobites and Nestorians, moves on to the concept of the Trinity, the disputes surrounding it, and the claim that Christian law remains valid and un-abrogated.

After narrating these doctrines (Junaybir, *n.d.*), Ibn Kammuna begins his method of critique and refutation, which he frames through phrases like:

- “Those who oppose the Christians may say...” – without clarifying whether these opponents are Jews or Muslims.
- This style mirrors Islamic refutations.
- He then proceeds: “The best they [Christians] can answer is...”, followed by “I said...” or “What I cited...” or “The truth is...” – indicating his general pattern of first presenting a view and then responding to it.

His detailed methodology includes:

1. Differentiating Christianity from Judaism

This is subtly implied through two approaches:

A. Christians are not bound by Torah laws:

- Ibn Kammuna interprets the verse from Matthew’s Gospel (“Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets...”) as follows: “This means the Torah promised the coming of Christ, and its laws must be followed only until his appearance—not forever.” Thus, once he appeared, the promise was fulfilled, and the legal obligation ceased. (Ibn Kammuna, *n.d.*)
- He even justifies changes Christians made to Torah laws, citing Paul’s views, and claims it is not neglect, as Christians are not obligated to abide by Mosaic law. (Junaybir, *n.d.*; Malkawi, 1412 AH / 1992 AD)

In truth, this stance is an admission of abrogation, though Ibn Kammuna avoids calling it that explicitly.

B. The “Good News” in Scripture refers not to Christ specifically:

- He argues that David (peace be upon him), or any prophet from Moses’ tradition, could be the one referred to in the prophecies, especially since prophethood had ceased among the Israelites for over 300 years before Christ appeared. (Ibn Kammuna, *n.d.*)

2. Asserting Contradictions in the Four Gospels

- Ibn Kammuna emphasizes the internal contradictions of the four canonical Gospels and criticizes the forced harmonization attempts by Christian scholars. (Ibn Kammuna, *n.d.*)

3. Defending Christianity and Its Beliefs

- Interestingly, Ibn Kammuna defends Christian beliefs, even noting: "Most of these responses I did not find in Christian writings themselves, but I formulated them on their behalf to complete the analysis of their doctrine." (Ibn Kammuna, *n.d.*). This suggests an intellectual impartiality or perhaps an effort to construct the strongest version of the Christian position before critique.

4. Supporting the Doctrine of the Trinity and the Union of Natures

- He accepts the Christian view of the union between divinity and humanity in Christ:
 - Christ's eating, sleeping, and drinking pertain to his human nature (*na sut*), not to his divine nature (*lahut*).
 - Hence, Christians rightly call him a complete man and complete God. (Ibn Kammuna, *n.d.*)

5. Acceptance of Non-Mutawatir (Isolated) Reports about Christ's Miracles

- Ibn Kammuna defends the validity of solitary reports: "If miracles were transmitted through solitary chains, some of those individuals reportedly performed even more miracles than Christ himself—and were followed by multitudes whose reports cannot be reasonably doubted." (Ibn Kammuna, *n.d.*)

This shows a flexible epistemology that doesn't strictly require *tawatur* (mass transmission) for belief in historical reports.

6. Recognizing Widely Spread Reports as Semi-Mutawatir

- He adopts the idea that widespread, popularly accepted accounts approximate the strength of *tawatur*, even if not technically meeting the criteria for certain knowledge. (Ibn Kammuna, *n.d.*)

7. Acceptance of General Narratives About Christ and His Companions

He affirms the piety, asceticism, and virtue of Christ's disciples and considers the accounts about them to be reliable and authentic. (Ibn Kammuna, *n.d.*)

8. Dismissing Some Opposing Arguments as Baseless or Petty

He critiques the objections raised by some critics of Christianity as: "Merely mockery and rejection; some of them are clearly refutable, even if only by forced reasoning." (Ibn Kammuna, *n.d.*)

Third Topic: His Methodology Regarding the Islamic Faith

Ibn Kammuna concluded his book by discussing Islam, and his approach in this chapter significantly diverged from his treatment of Judaism and Christianity, to the extent that one might say he completely reversed his methodology. This section received the largest share of debate, progression in argumentation, and explicit presentation in Ibn Kammuna's book. His general method in presenting and refuting Islam was as follows: he summarized the key tenets of Islamic belief, followed by raising 15 questions, each designed to provoke doubt—and then offering answers that are so brief they cannot even be called summaries, often just a line or two. These responses frequently introduced a new doubt or presented an uncertain opinion that could not be considered a valid rebuttal. An example is his response to those who objected to the clarity of the Qur'an, where he said: "*Describing the book as clear does not necessitate that everything in it is clear.*" (Ibn Kammuna, *n.d.*). In reality, such a response itself requires a rebuttal. It is not something that can be accepted, let alone be considered a rebuttal to an already weak counter-argument.

After these responses, Ibn Kammuna would transition to offering his own opinion, introduced by the phrase "*And I say...*"—a tone fluctuating between skepticism and reluctant acceptance of Islamic positions. He progressed in this style, sometimes initially accepting a point only to later cast doubt upon it through a sequence of linked arguments. Despite the length of this section—more than double what he dedicated to the other two religions—he still concluded that the questions he raised were insufficient, saying: "*It is possible to pose many more questions regarding the proof of the Qur'an, but I will mention those not brought up by the theologians.*" (Ibn Kammuna, *n.d.*).

He then listed six arguments, responded to each with his opinion, and cast considerable doubt on the Qur'an's miraculous nature and the prophethood of Mohammed (peace be upon him). His methodology here can be outlined as follows:

1. Preemptive Generalization and Alarmism

He began with an exaggerated and sweeping claim: "*Muslims differ over the very essence of God—some anthropomorphize, others deny this; they differ over His attributes, actions, names, and even over the nature of prophethood... to such an extent that the disagreements are nearly uncountable.*" (Ibn Kammuna, *n.d.*). This introduction gives the impression that Islam is confused and lacks firm foundations—completely contrary to reality. Notably, this technique was absent from his treatment of Judaism, where he dismissed differences among Jews, and Christianity, where he allowed all sorts of contradictions and changes without question—only to launch such an aggressive introduction before even beginning to discuss Islam.

2. Gradual Undermining of the Qur'an's Miraculous Nature

He questioned the Qur'an's transmission by saying: "*Not all details of the Quran are mutawatir (mass-transmitted), nor were they all passed on orally.*" (Ibn Kammuna, *n.d.*). He used the diversity of readings (*qira'at*), Abu Bakr's collection of the Qur'an, and the Prophet's occasional silence regarding the Quran's miraculousness as arguments to undermine its authority. But in truth, the multiple readings

of the Qur'an confirm its divine origin, as they do not contradict each other but instead reflect linguistic richness and support one another in style and message (Qamḥawī, 1426 AH / 2005 AD).

3. Rejection of Solitary Reports (Aḥad Ḥadīths)

He said: *"We do not accept that the verses in question are mass-transmitted... nor do we accept the authenticity of related ḥadīths, as they are solitary reports."* (Ibn Kammuna, n.d.). This contradicts his approach in earlier sections, where he accepted Jewish and Christian claims even when their transmission was weak. It shows clear inconsistency and a lack of objectivity.

4. Judging the Qur'an by the Bible and Torah

He evaluated the Qur'an based on its alignment with the Torah and Gospel: *"Among the most shocking things to them [i.e., Jews and Christians] is the story of Solomon in the Qur'an... They believe it never happened... They also unanimously affirm the crucifixion of Jesus, just as they agree on his existence."* (Ibn Kammuna, n.d.) And: *"How can the legislation of Mohammed be valid when Jews and Christians have mass-transmitted reports that their own laws are valid until the Day of Judgment?"* (Ibn Kammuna, n.d.). This is deeply flawed: the Qur'an should be the reference for truth, not the other way around.

5. Denial of Jewish Practices Mentioned in the Quran

He denied Quranic statements about the Jews, saying: *"No Jew has ever said that Ezra is the son of God, nor that God's hand is chained, neither literally nor metaphorically."* (Ibn Kammuna, n.d.). Yet the Qur'an explicitly reports such statements.

6. Citing Fabricated Stories against Islam

He wrote: *"A group of people apostatized, including Abdullah ibn Saad, the Prophet's scribe."* (Ibn Kammuna, n.d.). Even the preface of his book rebuts this claim, calling it blatant falsehood. No reputable source reports that Ibn Saad apostatized and returned to Islam.

7. Using the Qur'an to Refute Miracles

He tried to use Quranic verses to argue that the Prophet had no miracles, saying: *"Had he brought clear miracles, he would have told people: Why ask for signs when I have already brought them?"* This approach contradicts the need for **objective consistency** in argumentation.

8. Undermining the Ṣaḥīḥayn (Bukhari and Muslim)

He claimed: *"Muslim reports of anthropomorphism are far more numerous and explicit than anything found in Judaism, especially in the two Ṣaḥīḥs."* (Ibn Kammuna, n.d.).

9. Attributing Sound Muslim Views to Greek Philosophy

He wrote: *"Were it not for their borrowing from philosophers, Muslims would not have developed arguments against believing God to be corporeal."* (Ibn Kammuna, n.d.).

10. Slandering the Prophet Mohammed (Peace be upon him)

He accused the Prophet of changing after declaring prophethood, not being ascetic, and enjoying worldly pleasures like wealth and women, echoing claims of the Jews during the Prophet's time. The Qur'an refutes this in: **{Or do they envy people for what Allah has given them of His bounty?}** [An-Nisaa: 54]. He also denied the "Paraclete" prophecy in the Bible refers to Mohammed (**Peace be upon him**).

11. Claiming Islam Is Inapplicable

He said: *"Muslim rulers are forced to contradict Islamic law to run their cities properly."* And: *"No one enters Islam today except out of fear, hope for power, or due to taxation."* (Ibn Kammuna, n.d.). These are sweeping generalizations with no statistical backing, devoid of objectivity or fairness.

12. Selective Quoting of Islamic Thinkers

He only cited figures like the Mutazila and Fakhr al-Din al-Razi, making al-Razi's responses his standard for judging the Qur'an. Yet, he ignored or dismissed other major schools of Islamic thought—especially the traditionalists—except when convenient.

The reality: Ibn Kammuna's methodology regarding Islam is highly inconsistent and contradictory, pulling from every doubt and choosing from each sect what suited his agenda. His presentation is crafted in a way that could confuse a Muslim reader with limited knowledge, and then he withdraws while appearing to wish for guidance. This is among the most dangerous and unethical approaches, lacking in both objectivity and scholarly integrity. Had he judged Islam by the same standards he used for Judaism and Christianity, he wouldn't have written what he did.

CONCLUSION

After this detailed study of Ibn Kammuna's methodology in his book *Tanqīḥ al-Abḥāth*, the following conclusions were reached:

First: Ibn Kammuna acknowledged prophethood according to the philosophical framework, particularly that of Muslim philosophers. He explained it through their theories involving psychic and rational forces, and suggested

that prophethood could stem from imaginations, dreams, or be experienced by someone in a particular mental state, among other possibilities.

Second: Ibn Kammuna believed in Judaism according to the Jewish tradition, affirming the transmission and continuity of the Torah and its law, denying its abrogation, interpreting its texts favorably, and affirming the truth of the prophethood and miracles of Moses (peace be upon him), but only Moses and those who followed his religion.

Third: Ibn Kammuna adopted a sympathetic and even fiercely defensive approach to Christianity, on the condition that it is viewed as independent from Judaism. He justified the alteration of the law, the concept of abrogation, following Paul's teachings, belief in the Trinity and incarnation, and acknowledged the validity of Christian doctrine as presented in the Gospels.

Fourth: He positioned himself as a fierce opponent of Islam, employing every possible method and strategy in presenting and refuting it. He outright denied the authenticity of the Qur'an's transmission, rejected the truth of miracles, attacked the Prophet Mohammed (peace be upon him) and his companions, and even justified lying against them.

Fifth: Ibn Kammuna did not adhere to the methodology he claimed in his introduction. He spoke subjectively, imposed his opinions, narrated false reports and weak traditions, and went beyond what adherents of each religion said about their own. He lacked objectivity, failing to apply the same standards across all three religions.

Sixth: Ibn Kammuna operated through a concealed Jewish identity, masked by claims of fairness. In reality, his standards were blatantly double, biased toward Judaism and its allies, and expressed a preference for the Jewish character. He exhibited hostility toward Islam and its followers. As for Christianity, he maintained a neutral stance only where it aligned with Jewish interests. His writings also lack scholarly integrity, as he plagiarized extensively—especially from al-Ghazali and Muslim philosophers—selectively using what served his arguments while giving no attribution to the original sources.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Following the completion of this study, the researchers recommend the following:

First: Increasing attention by Muslim scholars and students of knowledge toward responding to the doubts and misconceptions raised by the People of the Book—namely Jews and Christians.

Second: Greater academic focus on producing university theses and dissertations that offer detailed rebuttals of Ibn Kammuna and the content of his book *Tanqih al-Abhath*, given the importance of this topic, the availability of source material, and the richness of the content.

Third: Enhancing effort by educational and pedagogical institutions to equip the younger generation with the tools to resist and counter the doubts being raised about their faith.

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